**Year 10 ‘Exploring the World of Donnie Darko’ Unit**

(This unit will take approximately 5 - 6 weeks to complete)

**Context**:

Donnie Darko is, on its most basic level, a film that is homage to 80s culture. It’s a cult classic (like many 80s films!) that references other 80s films, uses popular 80s film themes, and is set in 1988. But that is not all Donnie Darko is about. The film also makes statements about the socio-political and cultural developments of the late 80s, the reversal of family roles, etc., as well as being a superhero film, or more properly, an anti-super-hero narrative. It’s also a film that presents the age-old debate about predestination and free will; it posits alternate dimensions and worlds. But that isn’t all, either. It also contains elements of psychoanalysis, nihilism and the occult.

**Content:**

Students will consider the various tools filmmakers use to deliver a narrative, specifically focusing on production techniques and story elements, as well as the role of the audience. They will examine non-linear structures and infer a greater level of understanding through the analysis of symbols and filmmaker intent. Students will develop an understanding of genre and related conventions, and address themes and representations via a written essay and an oral presentation.

**Key Terms:**

Production, editing, juxtaposition, genre, satire, mise en scene, stroyboards suburbia, conventions, protagonist, structure, linear, parallel, paranoia, wormholes, semiotics, lighting, diegetic, setting, themes, time travel, commentary, storylines, complications, resolution, allegory, equilibrium, foreboding, armageddon, emotional disengagement, schizophrenia, audience, nihilism, morality, conservatism, anarchy, morality, science fiction, destiny, free will.

**Aims & Objectives**:

**Skills**:

 Build film related vocabulary

 Understand film techniques during all stages of production

 Identify and analysis the use of symbols and the importance of structure when constructing a film.

 Understand story elements and the role of the audience

 Discuss key themes through a formal oral presentation

 Respond to a theme related topic in the form of a text response essay

**Knowledge & Understaning**:

 To gain a comprehensive understanding of the themes and issues of Donnie Darko

 To develop an understanding of non-linear story telling

 To understand the role of a filmmaker and how a film is constructed

 Define key terms and how to use them when responding to film as text

**Unit Overview**:

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| Learning Activity | Supportive Texts | Student Product | Assessment |
| Introduce Narrative.  Define what a film narrative is and how it differs to a written text.  Briefly explain the tools a filmmaker has at his disposal to tell a story. ie.  Pre Production   * Script * Storyboards * Rehearsals/Blocking Action   Production   * Camera * Mise en scene * Sound & Music * Lighting   Post Production   * Editing * Sound Design * Visual FX | Hero’s Journey  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZxs_jGN7Pg>  <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hhk4N9A0oCA>  <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGV1BvnyvGo>  Cite ‘Alice in Wonderland’  Suspension of Disbelief explained  Suspension of disbelief or "willing suspension of disbelief" is a formula for justifying the use of fantastic or non-realistic elements in literature. It was put forth in English by the poet and aesthetic philosopher [Samuel Taylor Coleridge](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Taylor_Coleridge), who suggested that if a writer could infuse a "human interest and a semblance of truth" into a fantastic tale, the reader would suspend judgement concerning the implausibility of the narrative.  The phrase "suspension of disbelief" came to be used more loosely in the later 20th century, often used to imply that the onus was on the reader, rather than the writer, to achieve it. It might be used to refer to the willingness of the audience to overlook the limitations of a medium, so that these do not interfere with the acceptance of those premises. These fictional premises may also lend to the engagement of the mind and perhaps proposition of thoughts, ideas, art and theories. | Class questions and answers relay regarding the art of filmmaking  Students define terms raised in the introduction to the unit, and provide a personal explanation for the Hero’s Journey and the Suspension of Disbelief | F |
| Introduction to film techniques:   * Camera * Editing * Mise en scene * Sound & Music * Lighting   Use a variety of examples to illustrate the role of production elements.  *(How a film is constructed for greater meaning?)*  *Non-diegetic: outside the world of the characters* | Intro to Film Techniques:  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFUKRTFhoiA>  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3EnnBDgMww>  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eb5OhhfnyfQ  Supplementary Clips – Youtube  *Psycho – Hitchcock*  *James Bond*  *Atonement*  *Children of Man*  *Raising Arizona – Coen Bros.*  *Gattaca – Niccol*  *The Third Man – Wells*  *Panic Room – Fincher*  *Inception – Nolan*  Worksheets.  <http://www.pimpampum.net/bubblr/>  Soundtrack extracts/samples. | Storyboard a sequence of shots to create meaning considering camera angles and sizes, and lighting. Annotate. (Associate with a season or an emotion.)  Ordering images to create a story.  Illustrate a setting/make a list of items in your bedroom that define your character.  Music commentary table – discuss sound & associated feelings with soundbites from Jaws, Star Wars, Stand by Me, Inception, Oblivion, Indian Jones, etc. | F |
| Introduction to story elements :  Cause & Effect  Setting  Structuring of Time  Narrative Possibilities  Multiple Storylines (plots & subplots)  Character Establishment & Development  Use a variety of examples to illustrate the role of story elements in narrative film  *(How elements of the story are developed and delivered?*  *Diegetic – inside the world of the characters)* | Movie Clips - Youtube  *Where the Wild Things Are – Jonze*  *Run Lola Run –*  *The Matrix – Warkowski Bros.*  *The Good, The Bad, The Ugly – Leone*  Handouts detailing each story element. | Plot line for a story.  3-2-1  3 Prod. Techniques  2 Story Elements  1 Audience Reception | F |
| Analysis of narrative structure: provide detail and examples of various plot progressions (ie. Linear, non-linear, parallel, etc.)  *(In what order is the story told?)* | Discuss non-linear structure and why it often leads to confusion.  Examples:  *Run Lola Run*  *Sliding Doors*  *Memento*  *500 Days of Summer* | Narrative Structure diagram | F |
| The Role of the Audience – diversity of interpretation  How meaning is created via the viewer’s beliefs, values, likes, dislikes, cultural backgrounds, personal experiences. | Discuss the role of the audience in the narrative process | Write a review  Onion diagram (outline personal attributes) | F |
| Opening Sequence | This is England – Discuss introduction (setting, character, much like a prologue)  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JBpJ4ZuFP8E |  | F |
| Themes and Issues:  Mental illness  The American Dream  Fear and Paranoia  Nihilism (anarchy)  Time Travel  Conservatism vs. Radical Thinking  Education System  Parallel Universe (science fiction)  Pre Determination vs Free Will | Write topics on board.  Students break into groups, assign a topic per group, share ideas and then report back to class.  Clarify ‘wormholes’.  <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wormhole>  Discuss the philosophy of Self Determination vs Free Will | Students brainstorm (concept maps) to establish prior knowledge.  Use butchers paper and decorate room with findings | F |
| Key ideas for discussion. | On board before screening:  Frank: 28 days, 6 hours, 42 minutes, 12 seconds, that is when the world will end… | 3 ideas  2 questions  1 reaction to this news | F |
| Examine the theory of time travel and the existence of parallel universes. | Read Roberta Sparrow excerpts.  [Y10 English\Year 10 English\the philosophy of time travel roberta sparrow with questions.docx](file:///D:\Users\whi\Downloads\Y10%20English\Year%2010%20English\the%20philosophy%20of%20time%20travel%20roberta%20sparrow%20with%20questions.docx) | Answer questions on handout | F |
| Pre Film Discussion | PowerPoint Presentation  [Donnie Darko Presentation.pptx](file:///D:\Users\whi\Downloads\Donnie%20Darko%20Presentation.pptx)  Questions  [donnie darko pre-viewing sheet.docx](file:///D:\Users\whi\Downloads\donnie%20darko%20pre-viewing%20sheet.docx) |  | F |
| Watch film | Donnie Darko – Richard Kelly (original version – do not watch director’s cut) |  |  |
| Post Film Reflection  Character Power Point  [Donnie Darko Characters .pptx](file:///D:\Users\whi\Downloads\Donnie%20Darko%20Characters%20.pptx)  The students may complete an oral presentation on characters rather than themes. If so, use the following guidelines:  [Donnie Darko character study oral presentation instructions.docx](file:///D:\Users\whi\Downloads\Donnie%20Darko%20character%20study%20oral%20presentation%20instructions.docx) | 1. a) Describe the character of Donnie Darko? b)How did you identify with him? c) What seems to motivate him? 2. a) How does Donnie’s impending death seem to affect him? b) How might it affect you? 3. a)”Every living creature dies alone…” What does this mean? How does Donnie deal with it? Is it true? And if so, how do we deal with it? 4. Donnie and Jim Cunningham are presented as opposites in the film. What bothers Donnie about Jim so much? What, in principle, is their conflict about? | Question & Answers.  [darko questions.docx](file:///D:\Users\whi\Downloads\darko%20questions.docx)  Plot line.  Cloze activity.  Character map | F |
| Discuss themes  and readings of the film | Discuss how they are explored in the text.  [Donnie Darko Explained.docx](file:///D:\Users\whi\Downloads\Donnie%20Darko%20Explained.docx)  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bz2GmTgCus | Speed Thinking.  Revised group brainstorming.  Oral Presentation  [Y10 English\Year 10 English\Donnie Darko Oral Presentation.docx](file:///D:\Users\whi\Downloads\Y10%20English\Year%2010%20English\Donnie%20Darko%20Oral%20Presentation.docx) | F  S |
| Play “Mad World” by Gary Jules. | Distribute lyrics.  <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oa-ae6_okmg>  Draw an illustration that reflects the song. | How does it make you feel?  How is it appropriate to the story of Donnie Darko?  Can you think of any other tracks that reflect the mood of the film? | F |
| Discuss production and story elements with regards to specific scenes (incl. opening sequence). | How does the filmmaker’s toolbox impact on character and plot development, and audience reception? |  | F |
| Quotes to prompt thinking | 20 Quotes  “Donnie Darko? What kind of name is that? It makes you sound like a superhero.”  “What makes you think that I’m not?”  [Some Donnie Darko quotes.docx](file:///D:\Users\whi\Downloads\Some%20Donnie%20Darko%20quotes.docx) | Context and Meaning – how does it establish and develop character?  Students are to infer 5 quotes each. | F |
| Text Response | "The character of Donnie Darko faces significant internal and external conflicts. He must decide whether to follow the path that is set out for him by unknown forces, or make his own choice and face the consequences." Discuss  Donnie Darko is perceived by viewers of the film as being a classic anti-hero. He displays no consistent attributes that either a hero or superhero would normally possess but rather has glimpses of heroic feats that come about due to events out of his control. Do you agree? | Model inaccurate and accurate responses | S |
| Genre elements  Film Style | Discuss genre elements –  To which Genre does D. Darko belong?  Does it cross genres?  Is it a horror? Why?  Dali, Fincher, Escer, Surrealist Art  <http://www.theartstory.org/artist-dali-salvador.htm> | Genre table  Influences on cinema research assignment | F |
| Satire (a reflection of time and place) | Discuss the meaning of satire  **Satire** is a genre of literature, and sometimes graphic and performing arts, in which vices, follies, abuses, and shortcomings are held up to ridicule, ideally with the intent of shaming individuals, corporations, government or society itself, into improvement. | What view does Richard Kelly have of suburbia?  Research Assignment - The 1980s | F |
| Symbolism  (Ie. The Rabbit, The Rabbit Hole, Dreams) | Semiotics – powerpoint  [Intro to Semiotics.ppt](file:///D:\Users\whi\Downloads\Intro%20to%20Semiotics.ppt)  Examples of literary symbolism:  The Wolf – M. Barbalet (picture story book); Alice in Wonderland – Lewis Carrol;  Lion, Witch & The Wardrobe – C.S Lewis | Specific examples from D. Darko – connotation and annotation  (see earlier .ppts) | F |
| Further reading:  Philosophy and Religion | “Where is Donnie?”  <http://jaysanalysis.com/2010/11/06/decoding-donnie-darko-esoteric-analysis/>  <http://markdarko.webs.com/beliefsindonniedarko.htm> |  | F |
| Extended: Teen Movie (representations) | Ferris Bueller’s Day Off, The Breakfast Club, Back to the Future, etc.  View D.D. school montage and ET bike ride | Identifying Codes and Conventions that belong to particular forms and movements | F |
| Extended: Anti Hero  Discuss the notion of a rebel with a cause | Intertextuality –  Graham Greene’s ‘The Destructors’  [destructors.pdf](file:///D:\Users\whi\Downloads\destructors.pdf)  Ambrose Bierce’s ‘An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge’  [owl.pdf](file:///D:\Users\whi\Downloads\owl.pdf)  Catcher in the Rye http://thelitterateurs.wordpress.com/2013/04/30/j-d-salingers-the-catcher-in-the-rye-full-pdf-version/ | Do we sympathise with Donnie?  Assign readings and discuss similarities between themes and characters | F |